



AMERICAN ADVISORS EVACUATED from Quang Tri before it fell to enemy forces are greeted by personnel at Da Nang Afb. Altogether, 132 American and Vietnamese were taken to safety by three HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giants of the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron.

HH-53s evacuate 132 from Quang Tri

TAN SON NHUT AB, RVN -- Fire Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giants performed the largest evacuation of the Southeast Asian conflict when they airlifted 132 American and Vietnamese out of Quang Tri.

Three of the HH-53s, of the 37th ARRSq at Da Nang Afb, were responsible for carrying out the evacuees. A fourth helicopter landed to make sure all persons were evacuated and a fifth stood by in case it was needed.

The 132 evacuees were taken to Da Nang.

U.S. Air Force and Navy air strikes
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which still had to weave through a corridor or ground fire from North Vietnamese tanks and anti-aircraft guns on their way into and out of the provincial capital.

Miraculously, no one was injured aboard the helicopters during the rescue operation.

While supporting the effort, an Air Force O-2 forward air control aircraft and A-1 Skyraider rescue support fighters were shot down. The FAC pilot bailed out and was rescued by friendly ground

forces. The fighter pilot ditched his A-1 in the ocean and was picked up by an Army helicopter.

The first Super Jolly Green Giant to land received sniper fire from two enemy soldiers. SSgt. Robert L. LaPointe, a pararescueman, silenced them with bursts from his mini-gun in the rear of the helicopter.

After his helicopter landed, Ser-

geant LaPointe jumped out and organized the persons on the ground so the operation would go smoothly. He remained on the ground and boarded the second helicopter to land.

The first helicopter picked up 37 evacuees, the second, 45 and the third, 50.

The fourth Super Jolly Green Giant landed to make sure that all the persons had been picked up. When it was on the ground it received AK-47 automatic weapon and sniper fire from the North Vietnamese in the landing area. Sgt. William J. Thompson, a PJ, knocked out the AK-47 with bursts of his mini-gun and the sniper fire was suppressed by Sgt. Daniel G. Manion, another PJ.

All the HH-53s returned safely to Da Nang.

Also on the first HH-53 to land were Maj. Jackson R. Scott Jr., aircraft commander; Capt. David E. Mullenix, copilot; Sgt. Ronald W. Blackwell, flight engineer; and Sgt. David Young, PJ.

The second helicopter crew was Capt. Rodney S. Griffith, aircraft commander; Maj. Anthony A. Gates, copilot; SSgt.

David Garcia, flight engineer; SSgt. Cole E. Panning and Sgt. Charles B. McQuoid, PJs.

The third Super Jolly Green Giant was crewed by Capt. John R. Weimer, aircraft commander; Capt. Gary A. Dake, copilot; SSgt. William A. Simm, flight engineer; Sgt. Michael A. Aillet and Sgt. Richard L. Steed, PJs.

Besides the PJs on the fourth helicopter, were Capt. Donald A. Sutton, aircraft commander; Maj. Jerry J. Gilbert, copilot; and SSgt. Jimmie D. Minshew, flight engineer.

76th locates missing skiff

HICKAM AFB, Hawaii -- Locating an overdue 17-foot skiff in the middle of the night promised to be a difficult task for the rescue alert crew of the 76th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron.

Nevertheless, some sound consideration of the boat's probable drift and a little luck resulted in the speedy locating of the tiny vessel just seven miles off shore.

The boat, Fireball, missing from Kailua-Kona with six people on board, was too small to register on the HC-130 airborne radar and a visual sighting would depend on a chance sighting of the vessel's running lights on the dark surface of the sea.

The 76th ARRSq HC-130 scrambled as the sun was setting and headed directly toward Kona, where they began a low level search in the dark for the missing skiff. After locating one boat, which was determined not to be the Fireball, the crew resumed their search along the craft's probable line of drift.

They had no sooner reentered their pattern when a sharp eyed scanner spotted a light in the water. As the HC-130 turned toward it, another light began to blink.

Three dots, three dashes, three dots -- the SOS, international signal of distress.

Barely a half hour after arriving over Kona, the rescue crew had located their search object.

Capt. Richard L. Cecil, the HC-130's pilot, dropped illumination flares to positively identify the boat and the crew could clearly make out six people on board.

All that was required was to circle the disabled Firebird until the Coast Guard cutter Cape Newagen arrived to tow the boat, which had suffered engine failure, in to shore.

Reserves get HC-130s

ROBINS AFB, Ga. -- The first HC-130 aircraft to be assigned to an Air Force Reserve unit has been delivered to the 305th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron at Selfridge ANG Base, Mich.

Nine additional Hercules aircraft will be delivered to the 305th ARRSq and the 303rd ARRSq at March AFB, Calif., as replacements for the older HC-97 Stratofreighters.

Receipt of the faster, more modern Hercules will enable the 303rd and the 305th to more effectively assist in every type of ARRS mission. Additionally, the units will eventually have complete compatibility with active duty rescue units, based on the ability of the reservist to fly side-by-side with regular force crewmembers in a mixed-crew posture.